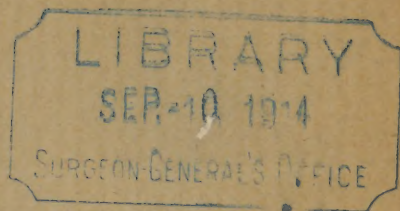


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# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

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BY THE PRESIDENT, RUDOLPH MATAS, M. D.,  
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

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[Extract from Proceedings Louisiana State Medical Society, Session 1895.]

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# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

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BY THE PRESIDENT, RUDOLPH MATAS, M. D.,  
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

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*Fellow Members of the Louisiana State Medical Society, Ladies and Gentlemen*—A wise and time-honored custom has made it a rule of this society that at these annual meetings a portion of our time should be devoted to the more open or direct cultivation of the relations that exist between the medical profession and the public. In the furtherance of this object it is specified in our constitution that the President shall deliver an address designed “to promote the objects of the society and to report what has been and is likely to be accomplished during his Presidency to promote these objects.”

The essential part of this duty has already been complied with in my executive message, which deals in detail with the administrative or domestic affairs of this society, as they have developed during the course of my incumbency, and with it have also been presented the recommendations that have been suggested by my study and experience in its affairs.

With the same purpose in view, the distinguished and accomplished speaker who has consented to enrich the memories of this occasion with his abundant wealth of research, eloquence and logic, is to further strengthen the common cause by delivering the annual oration.

Immediately after, our learned fellow-member, Dr. Gustavus Devron, will introduce a new and welcome feature in our proceedings by delivering an historical address on the Physicians of the Colonial Period of Louisiana, with which we hope to begin in chronological sequence a series of annual discourses which shall epitomize with time a most interesting history of the medical profession of this State.

In still further illustration of the profound concern of medical science in the welfare of humanity, our distinguished and genial fellow, Dr. Powell, of the Army, will demonstrate the effect



of the latest and most destructive addition to the armament of nations, the Krag-Jurguesen Rifle, and the measures devised by the medical corps of the army to minimize its frightful ravages on the battle-field.

Thus we shall be called to witness the extraordinary paradox of our modern civilization in the spectacle offered by man, striving, on the one hand, to concentrate his genius in the destruction of his species, and, on the other, struggling, by his most devoted and intelligent efforts, to preserve it.

With this abundance of preparation for a most profitable evening's entertainment, I feel that I must not trespass upon your indulgence by an exhaustive discourse upon the innumerable subjects which identify the mission of this society with the public weal, to which I am restricted by the traditions of my office.

I cannot resist the temptation, however, to linger for a few moments upon a few of these, hoping that by so doing the general objects of this organization will be best illustrated and promoted.

In May, 1846, a convention, composed of some of the most distinguished representatives of the medical profession of the United States, drew up a series of resolutions which declared, among other propositions, that it was expedient "for the medical profession in the United States to institute a national medical association; and inasmuch as an institution so conducted as to give frequent, united and emphatic expression to the views and aims of the medical profession in this country must, at all times, have a beneficial influence and supply more efficient means than have hitherto been available for cultivating and advancing medical knowledge; for elevating the standard of medical education; for promoting the usefulness, honor and interests of the medical profession; for enlightening and directing public opinion in regard to its duties, responsibilities and the requirements of medical man; for exciting and encouraging emulation and concert of action in the profession, and for facilitating and fostering friendly intercourse between those who are engaged in the practice of medicine," it was resolved, that in May, 1847, the convention would meet in Philadelphia under the title of the American Medical Association, where it would adopt its constitution and begin its official existence.

This was the origin, and these the broad and altruistic

principles that have guided the career of our national organization during the forty-five years of its existence; this the platform upon which we have built our constitution, as adapted to the needs of our State, and that we, together with the medical organizations of all the States and Territories of our grand Republic, have pledged ourselves to sustain.

In the sixteen years that have elapsed since the organization of this society, in 1878, to the present session, it has undergone many trials and vicissitudes which have more than once threatened its existence; but the record of the last few years, and especially of the years 1894-95, prove that the anchor of our expectations is now firmly imbedded in the undying rock of professional and public recognition.

With an active living constituency of over 400 members, and a territorial representation in our membership embracing 79 per cent. of the parishes in the State, it must be admitted that our success as a society is permanently insured and that the veil of the future should hide from us no cruel disappointments."

Having stated the general aims and objects of our organization, it may be asked, what results have we accomplished? what claims have we as a society to permanent recognition as a beneficial factor in the social, material and intellectual progress of this State?

In what manner, apart from the great and enduring benefits which accrue from the technical and professional advancement of its members, has our society identified itself with the welfare of the commonwealth?

The answer is ready and at hand.

If we bear in mind that the Louisiana State Medical Society is affiliated with and is one of the constituent branches of the federation of State Medical Societies in the United States, and that it has, in compliance with the conditions of its affiliation and through its delegates to the national convention, as well as through its associate membership, indirectly participated in all the great movements undertaken by our national organization to promote the welfare of the people in all matters appertaining to public health, you will admit that in this sphere alone we have already served the State.

The annual sessions of the American Medical Association, which are composed largely of delegates, have greatly promoted



scientific research with the cause and treatment of diseases of every character, the formation of State Boards of Health, higher medical education and the publication of treatises on preventive medicine and medical practice which form a continuous line of medical progress in the last half of this century.

In accomplishing this great work the Louisiana State Medical Society has joined with her sister societies in giving moral support and material aid to the parent organization.

When we turn from the wider arena of the nation to our own special province, we are met by the query: What have you as a State society accomplished for the good of the medical profession and the people of Louisiana? This question was answered in part by one of my predecessors, President Elliott, who quoted from the reports of Professor Stanford E. Chaillé, chairman of the Committee on State Medicine, from 1878 to 1886, and whose invaluable and imperishable services we must ever gratefully remember, in securing the following legislative enactments that constitute the strongest historic claim that this society has to public as well as professional recognition:

(1.) Art. 178 of the Constitution of 1879: The General Assembly shall provide for the interest of State medicine in all its departments, for the protection of the people from unqualified practitioners of medicine; for protecting confidential communications made to medical men by their patients while under professional treatment, and for the purpose of such treatment; for the establishment and maintenance of a State Board of Health.

This enactment, it is seen, is mandatory, and affords a constitutional basis upon which we can claim the attention of the General Assembly to any question deemed by us of importance to the public welfare.

(2.) Art. 176 of the Constitution of 1879, in which practitioners of medicine are given a privilege on property for the medical expenses of a last illness.

(3.) Art. No. 31 of 1882, regulating the practice of medicine, being the law of registration as now carried on in Louisiana.

(4.) Art. No. 82 of 1882, defining and punishing the adulteration of drugs, food and drinks.

(5.) Art. 92 of 1882, providing for the organization of local Boards of Health throughout the State.

(6.) Art. No. 19 of 1884, ordering compensation to medical experts.

(7.) An act compelling the teaching of physiology and hygiene in the public schools of the State.

(8.) Art. 66 of 1888, pharmacy law, by which the practice of pharmacy is placed under the control of an examining board.

All of the above were advocated by the Louisiana State Medical Society, but the passage of these last two were also due to additional influences.

(9.) Finally, Art. No. 49:

To regulate the Practice of Medicine and Surgery and Midwifery and to create a State Board of Medical Examiners, which was promulgated July 31st, 1894, which is, without a doubt, the greatest legislative concession that for the good of the people has been obtained by this society.

I have on different occasions referred to this law as the *magnum bonum* that our society has striven to secure, ceaselessly, patiently and in the face of many discouragements, since its origin. It would be impossible for me to insist further upon the benefits that must accrue in the near future from the efficient operation of this law, without tiresome repetition. All my predecessors have, individually, and with increasing vigor, advised this society of the urgent need of restrictive legislation to suppress the evils of charlatanism and quackery and to purify the medical body of this State of a horde of imposters who had sought refuge in its hospitable soil. The clear, logical and forcible argument in behalf of the enactment of the bill which created the present law must remain indelibly impressed in your memories as the last public utterances of my deeply regretted predecessor.

The address of the able President of the Board of Examiners has already so irrefutably demonstrated the utility of the Board of Examiners, in the short period of its existence, that to dwell further on this subject would be unpardonable.

In the brief outline of the legislative work accomplished by the society and in its abundant contribution to medical knowledge, we have found sufficient evidence of a solemn determination to redeem the implied promises of our founders and to continue in the discharge of our duties as plainly laid down in our constitution.



But the work of the Louisiana State Medical Society has only begun.

The success thus far achieved, gratifying as it must be to all its members, should prove only an incentive to more perfect organization in order that the work so well commenced may be finally rewarded by the complete realization of our ideas, which have ever been the advancement of State medicine, the cultivation of professional knowledge and of professional worth, and the promotion of the public welfare.

A word, now, to my fellow-members, the medical men of Louisiana.

The Louisiana State Medical Society was organized for the benefit of every medical man in the State. Through its annual sessions and its annual volume of transactions it brings him in touch with the great professional problems that interest him most. Its work and its influence belong to all alike. The country doctor and the city physician, the general practitioner and the specialist, the theoretical and the practical man, all meet here on the same level and have equal voice in the control of the society. It should be a source of pleasure and of pride to be a member of this society; for, by so doing, the physician not only contributes to professional advancement, but by affiliation with the American Medical Association he takes part and aids in the growth and progress of American medicine and thus materially contributes his share to the fund of general knowledge and the cause of civilization.

It should be every man's ambition to elevate the standard of his profession among his brethren and in the estimation of the public, and to gain such eminence as he may, by upright conduct toward his fellows, by honesty to the public and by literary and professional industry. A man may, by his ability and by his professional traits, rise to the highest pinnacle of local and public esteem. His reputation as an able and successful practitioner may be merited, but his profession demands something more from him. He is not living up to his professional duty if he does not endeavor to enrich the field of professional knowledge by the ripe results of his own investigations and experiences.

If he, by writings and contributions to his medical societies and to professional journals, gives to his fellow-physicians the valuable knowledge which he is continually gathering, he has a claim



upon the gratitude of his fellows and his reputation is established. But if he lives content with the wealth he can acquire, not only his name and his fame die with him, for he has failed in his highest mission, and is justly forgotten by his professional brethren.

It should be a pleasure and a duty to attend the meetings and take part in the many discussions of the interesting questions which are here presented for consideration. The larger and more widely extended the membership the more valuable its meetings become. It is from the opinions of physicians from different sections of the State that a true conception of our local pathology and of the sanitary needs of the people is obtained. The discussions which follow the reading of papers often contain far more truth and practical suggestion than elaborate text-book chapters. In many of the papers received we are sure that much information is given which is far beyond the teachings of the last text-book. We should, furthermore, aim to make this society a tribunal to which any member may bring his opinions for test and comparison, and may sit in judgment on the views of others. No medical man can possibly fail to sympathize with its mission or contribute to its purposes without incurring the just reproach that he has been guilty of indifference to his highest professional and public duties.

Finally, permit me to repeat again what you have so often heard before, that the advancement of our society depends upon the life and action of its individual aggressive forces. The future is glistening with glorious possibilities; let us act so as to secure its richest rewards; concert of action, harmony of feeling and unity of purpose will win for us a magnificent victory and make us triumphant in years to come. Let us then accept the obligations of the hour and acknowledge this time as an opportunity in which we can awaken to deeper interest, renew our fealty and pledge our earnest co-operation in that work which will best develop the great and beneficent ends we are striving to accomplish.

Adapting to this occasion the language of a gifted speaker, I would say: "It was the boast of Augustus, that arch traitor to the liberties of his country, that he had found Rome of brick and left it of marble; and of Bonaparte, that he found France without

law, and left it the Code Napoleon—a monument to his matchless ability, before which the splendid triumphs of Austerlitz and Marengo sink into comparative insignificance.”

How much nobler might be the boast of the Medical Society of Louisiana when, in future years, we shall be able to say: “Though we found the profession in this State the prey of the charlatan and empiric we left it distinguished by science; we found it chaotic and discordant, we left it organized and harmonious; we found it with the education of its members below the requirements of their calling, we left it with physicians in the foremost ranks of science and learning; we found it without its due weight or influence in society, we left it honored by the rich and sustained by the blessings of the poor.”

If to the consummation of this glorious end I have contributed in any manner, I am profoundly grateful, and repeat my thanks to you for the opportunity.